

Standard USG-3: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the continuing role of the United States Constitution in the defining and shaping of American government and society.

USG-3.5 Summarize features of the election process in the United States, including the roles of the political parties, the nomination process, the Electoral College, and the campaigns; the issues of campaign funding; and trends in voter turnout and citizen participation. (P, H)

Taxonomy Level: 2.4-B Understand Conceptual Knowledge

Previous/future knowledge:

Although they would have studied various candidates and elections, students would have limited information about the development of political parties.

It is essential for students to know how the major political parties are organized and how they function in choosing candidates for office. This indicator allows for the inclusion of congressional races (and even state races) but its focus is on the presidency, as the preeminent office, and its representative nature of the overall election process. Students should be able to explain why election participation rates are extremely low in the United States, as well as provide examples of this phenomenon. It will be important to study the campaign process, including strategies and techniques (utilized by candidates, political parties, and special interest groups) for building support and/or opposition to a candidate. An awareness of the purpose and function of the Electoral College is necessary and needs to be understood as one component of election strategy. It should be noted that the distribution of electoral votes is determined by states. Students should be aware of the current debate surrounding the necessity and purpose of the Electoral College.

It is not essential for students to know the exact percentages of group participation in any given election. There also is no need for students to know the specific number of electoral votes for any given state. Given these caveats, however, students should have a general understanding of electoral vote distribution, of election participation rates among key demographic groups, and of voting tendencies among these groups.

Assessment guidelines: The objective of this indicator is to summarize the features of the election process in the United States, therefore the primary focus of assessment should be to generalize major points about the role of political parties, the nomination process, campaigns, and the nature of elections; including an analysis of the Electoral College. Appropriate assessment would require students to give examples of how these factors have influenced elections in recent years.